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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BRASILIA 001188

SIPDIS

PLEASE PASS TO HHS FOR VGIDI
PLEASE PASS TO NIH FOGERTY CENTER REISS

STATE FOR OES/IHA KBLISS
STATE FOR WHA/BSC
STATE FOR WHA/ESPC

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [TPHY](#) [KSCA](#) [BR](#)
SUBJECT: BRAZIL HEALTH NEWS UPDATE

REF: (A) BRASILIA 000804; (B) BRASILIA 001045

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

1. Summary: Brazil's Ministry of Health has made headlines both domestically and internationally, primarily regarding HIV/AIDS programs and drugs. The GOB has demanded negotiations for voluntary licensing for key HIV/AIDS "cocktail" drugs; refused approximately US DOL 24 million in potential future USAID HIV/AIDS program funds for domestic programs and promised countries in Africa and the Caribbean support for their HIV/AIDS programs. CDC support enabled the GOB to contain an outbreak of Chagas. (End of Summary).

Brazil Negotiates Voluntary Licensing To Produce HIV/AIDS Drugs

2. As reported in reftel, on March 14, 2005, the GOB announced that it had sent letters to several multinational drug companies asking that they agree to the voluntary licensing of anti-retroviral drugs to allow the drugs to be produced in Brazil. The Ministry of Health said the request was made because the cost of these drugs had reached unbearable levels, reportedly spending US DOL 217 million in 2004. Brazil reportedly produces eight of the 16 drugs used in the AIDS "cocktail" and the Ministry believes local laboratories will be ready to produce others next year.

In Brazil, HIV/AIDS medications are distributed at no charge to the 154, 000 patients treated by the public health network. The Ministry of Health estimates it will care for 180,000 patients in 2005.

Brazil Refuses USAID Funds To Fight HIV/AIDS

3. On April 28, 2005, the GOB announced that its national HIV/AIDS program decided not to accept USAID funds to support their program because recipient NGOs would be required to have written policies opposing the promotion of prostitution, a USAID requirement that they believe goes against their national policies on health and human rights. Brazil's HIV/AIDS Program's Director, Pedro Chequer, dismissed the possibility of cooperation contracts between USAID and Brazilian non-governmental organizations, if it would require them to sign anything stating their opposition to prostitution.

Chequer told the media that there is no way Brazil would give up its established policy of allowing access to condoms, syringes, and needles. Nor would the government allow Brazilian NGOs to be subject to foreign legislation, he said. In Chequer's opinion, even though USAID financing is directed at NGOs, the involvement of the Brazilian government is fundamental. The approximately US DOL 24 million in question is the remainder of a grant, that began in 2003 and was to run through 2008.

Although an infraction, prostitution is not a punishable crime in Brazil. There are programs aimed at promoting HIV/AIDS awareness among what Brazil refers to as "professional sex workers." Brazil has the world's largest program of free distribution of drugs against HIV/AIDs and it is considered a model by many international institutions. Recently, however, the Brazilian HIV/AIDs program has undergone problems such as lack of condoms and drugs.

Press guidance has been provided by S/GAC

Brazil Partners With Less Developed Countries On HIV/AIDS

4. Media reports indicate that Brazil plans to share with less developed countries its expertise in fighting HIV/AIDS. Brazil's Foreign Minister Celso Amorin announced on March 16, 2005, while on a visit to Mozambique, Brazil's intention

to help the country fight HIV/AIDS by building a pharmaceutical plant there. On April 8, 2005, while visiting Nigeria, President Lula said that Brazil was in negotiations with the government of Nigeria to transfer technology for the production of anti-retroviral medicines. On April 11, Brazil announced an agreement with CARICOM to provide for the transfer of technology to manufacture HIV/AIDS drugs, to be operational later this year.

CDC Supports GOB In Chagas Disease Outbreak

15. Since February 2005, a total of 3 deaths and 25 persons with illness due to Chagas's Disease have been confirmed in Santa Catarina state, in southern Brazil. Supervisors and epidemiologists in training from the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) - sponsored Field Epidemiology Training Program in Brazil's Ministry of Health are conducting a field investigation in collaboration with local and state public health experts. Nearly all the persons with Chagas's Disease who have been identified and interviewed reported drinking fresh sugar cane juice produced by one local vendor on the same day, and a high rate of illness was documented in employees in this location. U.S. CDC experts (Atlanta) have provided technical assistance to the outbreak investigation team. The Brasilia CDC office has provided supervisory and technical support for the field work and study design. CDC has offered laboratory and epidemiological collaboration, as part of their Field Epidemiology Training Office located in Brazil's Ministry of Health.

Comments

16. Health is just another area in which Brazil seeks a role for itself as a "leader" of the developing world. Ever since Brazil made its initial challenge in the WTO nearly five years ago over patent issues and the production of HIV/AIDS drugs, it has shown a willingness to challenge established norms. In addition to the examples outlined in this cable, Brazil has recently implemented ethics regulations governing medical research involving human subjects. This may impact on those developed nations that chose Brazilian institutions as partners in medical research. Apparently, Brazil's health policies, as they relate to international collaborations, are going through a period of transition.

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